

AGRiVIEW



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THE VIEW FROM 116 STATE STREET

Stay Home. Stay Safe.

Stay home. Stay safe. That's the message. The coronavirus pandemic is incredibly difficult for our world, country, and Vermont. We are taking extraordinary steps to stop the spread of this virus. To effectively halt its disastrous spread, everyone needs to do their part in drastically reducing interpersonal contact. While minimizing contact is essential, work that is critical to our public health and safety must continue, while taking safety precautions.



Vermont has long been proud of its farmers and producers, and now, the role of farmers and producers

is even more pivotal. The feed supplier, dairy farmer, vegetable grower, grocery store retail clerk—and everyone in between—generate our food production and supply and are essential to our safety as we

work through this public health emergency.

Governor Scott is striving to halt the spread of COVID-19 while recognizing the need for continued critical services. Previously, the Governor closed or altered the services of some businesses (such as bars and restaurants, regular childcare services, and “close contact” services), required social distancing, and required that employees telecommute whenever possible. Now, the Governor has declared a state of emergency. The Sixth Addendum to his Executive Order adopts even more restrictive measures to protect the State.

Effective March 25th at 5:00 p.m., all businesses are required to suspend in-person services, unless they provide services or functions deemed critical to our public health and safety as well as our economic and national security. Businesses that do not provide services or functions deemed critical can no longer provide in-person services but are encouraged to operate through alternate ways using tools like the Internet and telephone to do on-line sales or curb-side pickup or delivery.

The Governor identified these services and functions (among others) as critical and so must continue:

- Critical manufacturing, including food and animal feed manufacturing, processing and supply (including meat processing)

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Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

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THE VIEW FROM 116 STATE STREET

Stay Home, Stay Safe*continued from page 1*

- Agriculture and farms, animal shelters, production and delivery of seed, chemicals and fertilizers, CSAs and veterinarians.
- Retail businesses serving basic human needs such as grocery stores, pharmacies, other retail that sells food, beverage, animal feed and essential supplies, as long as these retail operations are conducted through on-line and telephone orders for delivery and curbside pickup as much as possible;
- Transportation and agricultural sector equipment parts, repair and maintenance, provided these retail operations are conducted through on-line and telephone orders for delivery and curbside pickup as much as possible
- Fuel products and supply
- Operations and maintenance of

wastewater/drainage infrastructure; and

- Other vendors of technical, security, logistics, custodial and equipment repair and maintenance services necessary to support the COVID-19 response, critical infrastructure and national security.

Businesses that are not listed above may request the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) consider making an individual determination that they provide services or functions that are critical to our public health safety as well as our economic and national security. To request an individual determination, fill out this form <https://bit.ly/covid-vt-business-operations>

While businesses that provide these critical services or functions remain open and are not subject to the prohibition against in-person services, they must follow the recommended public health safety measures of the CDC and Vermont Health Department. The businesses

must:

- have employees work remotely whenever possible,
- strictly require social distancing, and
- ensure the following practices whenever possible:
 - maintain a 6-foot buffer between persons,
 - make sure employees engage in good hygiene practices, including regular and thorough handwashing,
 - require sick employees to remain home, and
 - regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Everyone should take every possible measure to restrict the ability of the virus to spread. Social distancing is currently our most effective tool, and every business and

person should maintain safe buffers between individuals and avoid gatherings. To protect everyone—including our most vulnerable citizens—we all need to prevent person-to-person contact.

Food production, supply, and sales are always essential to our society. In this challenging time, our food producers and related businesses are critical, and their services are necessary and welcome. We are grateful for our food producers and related industries and sincerely appreciate your shared efforts to combat this public health crisis. Maintaining society's access to food while doing everything possible to curtail the spread of the virus is key.

Stay home. Stay safe.

Questions? Email us at agr.covidresponse@agriculture.gov.

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Covid-19 Information For Agriculture And Food Businesses

Important information on COVID-19 for farms, agricultural businesses, farm markets and service providers.

In an effort to keep our agricultural producers, businesses and service providers as up-to-date as possible on health and safety issues with the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the Agency of Agriculture will be maintaining the most recent information and guidance from the Vermont Department of Health and other sources on our website, agriculture.vermont.gov

We encourage you to visit the website as often as possible. Additionally, you may want to sign up for our newsletter <http://tinyurl.com/s8t3qu2> which will be emailed frequently with updated information and resources.

The Agency of Agriculture continues to ensure functions critical

to the agency and industry needs are met and carried out in the interest of public safety and public health. These functions include meat and poultry inspection, milk testing and inspections, regulatory disease testing in livestock, and licensing related to dairy, livestock, poultry, and agricultural commodities.

The Agency encourages you to email us directly to share concerns, ask questions or provide response

resources. That email address is agr.covidresponse@vermont.gov Our automated response to this email will supply you with links to additional resources and ask you to consider filling in a survey that collects information on emerging issues in agricultural and food industries. This information will be shared with other state and federal partners as we continue to formulate a response and recovery plan.



Anson Tebbetts, Secretary, Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Coronavirus COVID-19

Editor's note: This list is provided as a reference for you during this unsettling time. As we are a monthly publication we know that information is changing at a rapid rate. Some of the web links and phone numbers below are specific to the COVID-19 Pandemic but some are not. Please visit our website, agriculture.vermont.gov to see the most up to date agricultural information.

People are urged to go to <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19> for the most up-to-date information and guidance about COVID-19, including from the CDC.

Who to call:

- If you have questions about COVID-19: Dial 2-1-1

- If you are returning from China, Italy, Iran, South Korea or Japan: Call Health Department Epidemiology at 802-863-7240
- If you are ill, have symptoms (such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing), or are concerned about your health: Call your health care provider. Person-to-person spread of the

virus is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Take these preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

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Resources

PERSONAL SERVICES

Farm First
802-318-5538
<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/farm-first-resources-support-farmers>

VT Agricultural Mediation Program
802-583-1100
<https://www.emcenter.org/vtamp/>

MEALS
3SquaresVT
800-479-6151
<https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/3SquaresVT>

3SquaresVT (over 60)
800-479-6151
<https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/3SquaresVT/60plus>

FINANCIAL
Center for an Agricultural Economy
802-472-5362
<https://hardwickagriculture.org/>

Center for Women and Enterprise
802-391-4870
<https://www.cweonline.org/>

Farm Viability Program (VHCB)
802-828-3370
www.vhcb.org

Forest Viability Program (VHCB)
802-828-2117
<https://vhcb.org/viability>

Farm Service Agency (FSA)
802-658-2803
<https://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus>

Green Mountain Economic Development Corp
802-295-3710
<http://www.gmedc.com/gm/news-and-events/>

Intervale Center
802-660-0440
<https://www.intervale.org/blog-source/advancing-our-mission-in-challenging-times>

Land for Good
603-357-1600
<https://landforgood.org>

Northern Community Investment Corp
802-748-5101
<http://www.ncic.org/>

Small Business Association (SBA)
802-828-4422
<https://www.sba.gov/offices/district/vt/montpelier>

VT Agricultural Credit Corp
802-828-5627
<https://www.veda.org/>

VT Community Loan Fund
802-223-1448
<https://www.investinvermont.org/>

VT Dept of Taxes
802-828-2865
<https://tax.vermont.gov/coronavirus>

VT Land Trust
802-262-1224
www.vlt.org

VT-Small Business Development Center
802-728-9101
<https://www.vtsbdc.org/>

Yankee Farm Credit
800-639-3053
<https://www.yankeefarmcredit.com/>

LOGGING
Logger Education to Advance Professionalism (LEAP)
802-235-2908
<https://www.vtleap.com/>

Sustainable Forestry Initiative
802-828-3370
<https://www.sfiprogram.org/>

VT Dept of Forests, Parks & Rec
<https://fpr.vermont.gov/COVID-19>

VT Forest Products Association
802-755-6298
<http://vtfpa.org/>

VT Woodlands Association
802-236-2851
<https://www.vermontwoodlands.org/>

OTHER SUPPORT
Mad River Food Hub
802-496-3100
<https://www.madriverfoodhub.com/>

NOFA VT
802-232-2617
<https://nofavt.org/about-us/news>

UVM Extension
802-476-2003
<https://www.uvm.edu/extension>

VT Dept of Labor
802-828-4000
<https://labor.vermont.gov/>

VT Agency of Commerce
802-828-1093
<https://accd.vermont.gov/>

VT Child & Families
802-241-2131
<https://dcf.vermont.gov/COVID-19>

VT Dept of Health
866-652-4636
<https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/infectious-disease/2019-novel-coronavirus>

VT Food Venture Center
802-472-5362 (x206)
<https://hardwickagriculture.org/farmers-food-businesses/shared-use-commercial-kitchen>

VT Manufacturing Extension Center
802-728-1432
<https://www.vmec.org/>

Windham Grows
802-490-5976
<https://windhamgrows.org/>

Programs Pay Vermont Farmers for Soil-Friendly Agronomic Practices

By Sonia Howlett, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Summer is right around the corner! As you prepare your equipment and fields for the upcoming growing season, consider applying to state and federal grant programs that will support you to implement agronomic practices that will improve water quality and soil health.

You may be familiar with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which provides financial and technical assistance for the implementation of conservation practices, with attractive payment rates per acre. The Farm Agronomic Practices (FAP) grant program from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets also provides grant payments to help Vermont farms implement agronomic practices that improve soil quality, increase crop production, and reduce erosion and agricultural waste discharges. Eligible practices include crop rotation, cover cropping, manure injection, conservation tillage (reduced till and no till), and rotational grazing.

I spoke to several producers around Vermont who enrolled in the FAP program in previous years, to ask their thoughts on the program.

Lori Royer of Royer Family Farm, a small dairy in Irasburg, has been working



Joe Hescoock of Shoreham walks through his "Elysian Fields", which were planted with a nurse crop mix upon rotation out of annual crops and therefore earned him payment through the Agency's Farm Agronomic Practices program.

with Jeff Sanders to transition completely to no-till in the last three years and has used cover crops on her annual cropland for five years – a transition which has been sponsored by FAP grant payments. Lori spoke enthusiastically about the benefits that these conservation practices have had for her farm: she's seen noticeable improvements in her soil, her equipment no longer gets stuck in the wet spots, and the cover crops, which she interseeds in July, help with weed control. "You should have seen my fields last year, they looked beautiful!" Lori enthused over the phone.

Joe Hescoock, an organic dairy farmer in Shoreham, enrolled in the FAP program last year for crop rotation with a nurse crop. He intends to apply again this

year, adding in his acres of rotational grazing, and would encourage other farmers to do the same. Although the FAP payments are "a drop in the bucket," Joe has found that the FAP grant almost paid for the seed, which he finds makes the paperwork worth doing. "We get a lot of

regulations from the state, so it's nice to see them giving a bit of money back," he commented. "It's great to get paid because you're doing a good job."

Daniel Brooks of Wayward Goose Farm, a grass-based dairy in West Pawlet, has been grazing his herd for

the last nine years but first signed up for the rotational grazing payment last year, which was the first year it was offered. He intends to sign up again this year. "The inspector [who came out to make sure that the grazing met the requirements of the program] was really easy to get along with and the application was pretty painless: there wasn't a huge amount of paperwork to navigate," he said.

For more information on NRCS EQIP, contact your local USDA Service Center. To enroll in the Agency's FAP call Nina Gage at 802-622-4098 or visit agriculture.vermont.gov/fap Note that acreage enrolled in an NRCS EQIP contract for a conservation practice is not eligible for simultaneous FAP payment for that same practice. Applications for both programs are accepted throughout the year, but prior to implementation of the practice, so now would be a good time to apply!

DAIRY GRAZING APPRENTICESHIP

SERIOUS ABOUT FARMING??

SO ARE WE!

We have candidates to help your farm succeed.

Contact Mary Ellen Franklin
VT DGA Education Coordinator
Maryellen.franklin@uvm.edu
P: 802-254-2228

Want to farm? Check us out...
we have opportunities available now!
VISIT US AT DGA-NATIONAL.ORG

Community Food Access Programs Enrollment for Direct Market Farms

By Alissa Matthews, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Much is unknown about the long term implications of the current COVID-19 outbreak, however it seems clear that there will be an uptick in unemployment and the numbers of Vermonters receiving SNAP benefits (called 3SquaresVT in Vermont and formerly known as food stamps) will rise. Our

partners are anticipating increased consumer interest in direct purchasing due to crowding and shortages at traditional grocery outlets, and the current closure of farmers markets in the state. For these reasons, NOFA-VT is encouraging direct market farmers to consider accepting SNAP/3SquaresVT benefits.

To accept SNAP/3SquaresVT benefits, you must become a SNAP Authorized Retailer.

The process of becoming

an authorized retailer can take up to 45 days, so now is the time to apply! Learn how to apply at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply-to-accept>

Note: use the "Store Application" and choose "Direct Marketing Farmer" under the "Special Store Type" dropdown menu.

Once you are an authorized retailer you will need EBT (electronic benefits transfer) equipment to process SNAP/3SquaresVT payments. The State of Vermont is rolling out a program to provide free EBT-only processing equipment to farmers markets and direct market farms. We will send out details about that soon, however, you must already be an authorized retailer to apply for processing equipment, so we encourage you to begin the process of becoming authorized as soon as possible (it's free to apply).

NOFA-VT also facilitates a Senior Farm Share & Farm Share Program to increase access to fresh, local food.

Farmers who want to participate can learn more at <https://nofavt.org/farmshare/farmer>.

If you are able to and would like to support these programs, you learn how to donate at <https://nofavt.org/farmshare/donation>.

If you have questions, you can call 802-434-7162 or write Emmet@nofavt.org



Additionally, fully staffed farm stands can enroll between March and May every year to participate in the State's Farm to Family Program to be eligible to accept coupons from low-income and senior Vermonters. Those interested

should Dept. of Children and Family Services at AHS.DCFFarmtoFamily@vermont.gov to request enrollment materials. A new farm stand enrollment page is also available at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/f2f>

For Agricultural Events and Resources Visit:

- The VT Agency of Agriculture Events Calendar: <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/events/month>
- UVM Extension Events Calendars: http://www.uvm.edu/extension/extension_event_calendars
- Vermont Farm to Plate Events Calendar: <http://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/events>
- Northeast Organic Farming Association of VT Events Calendar: <http://nofavt.org/events>
- DigIn Vermont Events Calendar: <https://www.diginvt.com/events/>
- Required Agricultural Resources (RAPs) Resources: <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/water-quality/regulations/rap>
- Agency of Ag's Tile Drain Report now available here: <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/tile-drainage>
- VAAFM annual report now available here: http://agriculture.vermont.gov/about_us/budgets_reports
- Farm First: Confidential help with personal or work-related issues. More info call: 1-877-493-6216 anytime day or night, or visit: www.farmfirst.org
- Vermont AgrAbility: Free service promoting success in agriculture for people with disabilities and their families. More info call 1-800-639-1522, email: info@vcil.org or visit: www.vcil.org.

For more agricultural events visit our *Funding Opportunities & Resources for Businesses* webpage at: http://agriculture.vermont.gov/producer_partner_resources/funding_opportunities

For Immediate Release

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets have received an application for a Milk Handlers license from the following entity: Paisley Scoops, of Enosburg, Vermont to process, package, and buy and sell butter, transport, and bargain pasteurized ice cream mix (gelato) within the State of Vermont. If anyone has germane information as to why or why not this company should or should not be licensed those comments are to be sent to:

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets
Dairy Section Office
116 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05620-2901

All written comments must be received by June 30, 2020.

At that time the Agency will make a determination as to whether a hearing will be held. If we determine that a hearing is necessary and you wish to attend please write to the above address attention Dairy Section.

Borrow a Truck Scale to Inform Your Harvest and Manure Management

By Sonia Howlett, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

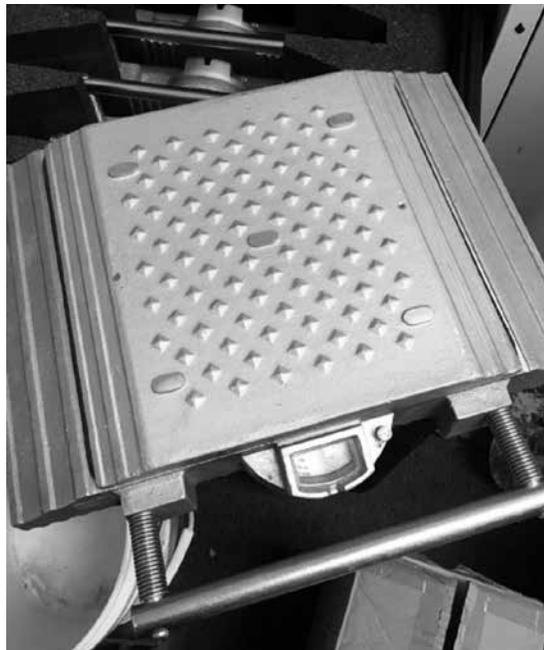
Truck scales allow farmers to determine the exact weight of their harvest or manure loads and to calibrate their yields and/or applications accordingly. Portable truck scales, which are drive-on and can be moved around the field and from farm-to-farm, are one of the most popular types of scale as they are versatile, convenient, and can be used for smaller loads. Truck scales can allow you to:

1. Keep specific and accurate track of yields

Truck scales allow you to calculate harvest yields on a field-by-field basis. Combining this information with measurements of the moisture content and/or your feed tests will give you a full picture of the quality and quantity of feed that you are producing.

2. Analyze the results of agronomy practices

Measuring yields from different fields over time can show you how the management decisions you make affect your yields and profitability. You can look, at an individual field basis, at how nutrient additions, tillage types, seeding ratios, and cropping methods are working for you each year.



One of 6 GEC MD 500 Drive-on Portable Truck Scales offered by the Orleans County NRCD office. Each scale goes under one wheel of the truck being weighed.

- 3. Understand the load weight of harvest or manure equipment**
Adding the exact load size of your manure spreading equipment to the measurements you have gathered from manure and soil sampling will allow you to adhere to your Nutrient Management Plan and to provide the precisely optimal amount of manure to your crops to maximize the efficiency of your manure.

- 4. Formulate plans**
You can use your yield information to budget your feed sales and purchases throughout the year and to prioritize the agronomy practices that are working best for you. You can update your NMP to most accurately calculate the appropriate number of loads on each field. All of this can help you maximize efficiency and to promote effective innova-

tion on your operation. If you are interested in reaping the benefits of truck scales but don't want

to make the investment to purchase them outright, don't worry: there are several local borrowing programs, in addition to the rental services offered by various private companies in New England. UVM Extension in Middlebury and NRCD offices in Orleans, Poultney-Mettowee and White River Junction all have portable truck scales available for farmers in their lending regions to borrow. Some districts provide moisture probes as well.

Several of these local service providers are making the truck scales available for free, while others ask for a daily donation to

support their equipment lending program. In addition, depending on the region, District staff may be able to transport the Portable Scales to your operation and help you use them. Contact your local Conservation District or UVM Extension for more information and to inquire about the availability of truck scales in your region.

Selected contacts with truck scale lending programs include: UVM Extension Middlebury: Office (388-4969). Orleans NRCD: Emily Irwin (624-7022). Poultney-Mettowee NRCD: Jennifer Alexander (558-6470). White River NRCD: Jennifer Byrne (369-3167).

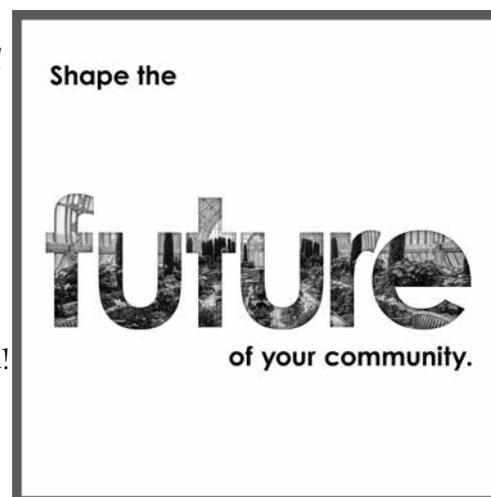
Be Counted, the 2020 U.S. Census Is Happening Now

By Kristina Sweet, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

By now, you have likely received an invitation to respond to the 2020 Census in the mail and may have even responded! The 2020 Census is required to count everyone living in the United States on April 1, 2020.

Responding to the 2020 Census is important and safe.

Census results help determine how billions of dollars in federal funding flow into states and communities each year.



In FY2016, Vermont received \$2,482,076,315 through 55 federal spending programs guided by data derived from the 2010 Census.

Source: Counting for Dollars 2020 Project, George

Washington University Institute for Public Policy

When you respond to the census, your answers are kept anonymous. By law, the U.S. Census Bureau cannot release any identifiable information about you, your home, or your business, even to law enforcement agencies.

Visit 2020census.gov

to respond or call the 2020 Census phone line at 844-330-2020 to respond in English or one of 12 other available languages. You can also respond by mail.

Impacts on Agriculture Due to Market Closures and Specific Industry Changes

By COVID Response Team,
VT Agency of Agriculture,
Food & Markets

Editor's note: This data was collected from March 19 – 30, 2020. As more data is received, the dollars and estimated percentages will change. This data is being used by the Agency to make short- and long-term response plans. To ensure that your business concerns are included, please send an email to agr.covidresponse@vermont.gov

The Agency's Agriculture and Food Business Impacts Survey received 64 responses between March 19-March 30. While this data captures the state of each business at in a moment of time, we have a snapshot of the impact COVID-19 has had on agricultural businesses in our state in the past 11 days:

- Of those 64 businesses, 9% reported closing their business, 43% reported being partially open, and 48% reported being fully operational.
- Businesses reported the impact of COVID-19 on their employment ranging from 0-100% loss of employees. The average (mean) loss of employees per business was 22%.
- Businesses reported their estimated economic losses totaling \$8,228,500 over the 64 businesses – a median of \$25,000 each.

The closure of restaurants has resulted in a significant reduction in the amount of

local food purchased from our agricultural producers:

- Farm to Plate estimated \$9.7 million of annual local food purchases are by VT chefs/restaurants - which is about 3% of total local food purchases

The closure of educational institutions has also affected local procurement levels. Colleges, particularly, since some school meals are being prepared and delivered at home to K-12 students:

- Sodexo estimates their local purchases between March – end of July (based on 2019 levels) was about \$900,000 in local purchases (almost 33% of total local purchases for the year).

K-12 Schools

- Many school meal programs are serving 1,500-2,000 meals a day, which we anticipate will increase with the recent USDA waiver allowing universal feeding sites for all children age 0-18, and with the economic downturn families are facing.
- Although some programs have continued direct purchasing of local food on a small scale, staff have had neither the time nor capacity to be searching for what local food is available, navigating the bidding process, and the added labor of preparing local food.

Farmers Market

Winter farmers market numbers are estimates for

the 14 VT winter markets

- \$1,171,005 = estimated loss of local food sales to farms vending at local winter farmers markets in March and April
- Representing approximately 300 businesses vending at 14 VT winter farmers markets

Summer market data are averaged assumptions based on 2018 data from 67 summer markets.

- \$230,019 = average gross sales for summer season for individual farmers market
- Representing approximately 1540 businesses vending at the summer farmers markets
- \$2,802,049 total estimated monthly sales at ALL 67 summer farmers markets
- TOTAL SNAP benefits redeemed at summer farmers markets = \$69,737
- AVG monthly SNAP redemption = \$12,679
- Matched by Crop Cash each month (NOFA-VT program)
- AVG monthly SNAP + Cash Crop sales = \$22,215

Grocery stores are seeing increased consumer demand and a difficulty at times to keep up with the demand

- VT Hannaford's 17 stores have seen 50% increase in demand and struggling to maintain adequate staff to support the customer demand
- Some coops have suggested "hazard pay" – some have approved 'an appreciation bonus' for employees working during these

uncertain and challenging times

Dairy industry

- Estimated loss to Vermont Dairy Farmers of \$182,000 per month per farm in income due to milk price decline
- Worse between April and August expected. 645 cow dairy farms impacted
- Great concern that large dairy farm attrition will occur but without ability for auctions, cattle transport, etc.

Cheesemakers

- Cheesemakers are reporting a range of market losses, which depends on the primary channels where their products are distributed.
- For those who engage in sales to restaurants, specialty stores, or for events such as weddings, loss of markets of 80% or greater are common.
- For those who only sell direct through farmers market, farm stores, or online, sales impacts are slightly less though many expect the impacts to grow.
- Grocery store sales losses depend heavily on the kind of cheese – cheeses cut and wrapped in-store have taken the hardest hit as stores reduce staffing or shift staff priorities.
- Some cheesemakers have reported actual losses in the tens of thousands while others have lost upwards of \$100,000 in two weeks' time.

- Projections for the next 6-8 weeks indicate catastrophic losses for many, upwards of \$500,000 for some and for others a complete collapse of their business without incoming funds
- Actual numbers and more complete projections will happen in the next two weeks as stores and distributors who have depleted any remaining backstock will potentially re-order and consumers become accustomed to buying online.

Produce industry is still moving forward with plant propagation and anticipation of summer markets

- Worries about H2A labor workers available
- Many producers are creating online ordering systems to meet growing customer interest

Greenhouses and nurseries, having been identified as non-essential businesses, are concerned about sales

- Many are offering online ordering and home delivery to avoid person-to-person contact

Diversified operations with online ordering and delivery options have seen a huge surge and overwhelming interest from additional customers

- Some farm stands are seeing their top consecutive sales days since COVID-19
- Specialty food businesses say sales remain strong.

Produce Safety Grants Improve Food Safety and Help Farms Grow

By Gina Clithero, VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Produce farms across the state are gearing up for a busy production season. In the midst of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, many growers are entering into this growing season asking hard questions about market resilience, labor changes, and production planning. Paramount among these questions is how growers can continue providing nutritionally important fruits and vegetables to the region while safeguarding public health.

The good news is that foodborne exposure to coronavirus is not known to be a route of transmission. The coronavirus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. However, there's no better time for farms to review, improve, and reinforce standard operating procedures for cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, and drying any food contact surfaces, food handling equipment, bins, and tools. By taking proactive measures to reduce produce safety risks, farms are also building in efficiencies and resilience that will help safeguard against further spread of the virus, particularly among farm workers.

The Produce Safety Improvement Grant (PSIG) program has helped growers take these proactive



measures by supporting farms in making produce safety improvements for the past two years. While the grant program is primarily aimed at reducing the risk of microbial contamination of fresh produce that can result in foodborne illness, these on-farm practices can also help farms adapt to new conditions, such as those posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

In March 2020, the PSIG program awarded \$103,551 to 18 Vermont produce farms making on-farm improvements that prevent or reduce produce safety risks. This grant round was funded by the Vermont State Legislature, the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the Castanea Foundation.

To date, the Vermont Produce Safety Improvement Grant program has awarded \$307,665 in grants to 47 Vermont farms. Each round saw an impressive range of

applications and, due to high demand, not everyone who applied was able to receive funding.

Projects granted in this round include renovations to wash and pack areas, equipment installations and upgrades, and improvements to produce cold storage on the farms listed below:

- **Burnt Rock Farm** to purchase a stainless steel and plastic barrel washer to wash root crops such as beets and carrots (\$5,810)
- **Clearfield Farm** to renovate an unused dairy barn to transition to an indoor processing, packing, and storage space (\$7,000)
- **Common Roots** to upgrade to stainless steel wash/pack surfaces, and to purchase bins, a garden cart, and a washing machine to convert to a cleanable greens spinner (\$2,628)
- **Deep Meadow Farm** to increase cold storage capacity (\$7,000)
- **Diggers' Mirth Collective Farm** to elevate packing totes and hoses off the floor, repair a roof leak, and purchase designated wash/pack scales and workwear (\$4,317)
- **Field Stone Farm** to install washable walls in an existing walk-in cooler, and to purchase a new stainless steel greens spinner, harvest bins, dollies, and stainless steel racks (\$6,404)
- **Foote Brook Organic Farm** to purchase stainless steel tables, a 3 bay sink, and a commercial faucet, drain, and hot water heater (\$3,610)
- **Footprint Farm** to purchase stainless steel tables, shelving, harvest totes, and hose reels to improve packhouse cleanability (\$7,000)
- **Good Heart Farmstead** to enclose and weatherize an existing wash/pack station and install washable walls and equipment (\$7,000)

- **Honey Field Farm** to purchase an ice machine to quickly remove field heat from harvested crops (\$3,707)
- **Intervale Community Farm** to purchase a readily cleanable greens spinner and field monitoring equipment to enhance traceback capability (\$3,708)
- **Lester Farm** to purchase additional color-coded harvest, storage, and transport containers (\$3,415)
- **Old Road Farm** to drill a new well for agricultural use and purchase flip-top harvest and storage totes (\$7,000)
- **ShakeyGround Farm** to initiate a pack shed upgrade by installing sub-floor components and laying a concrete floor with trench drains (\$7,000)
- **Small Axe Farm** to install lighting, washable walls, carts, stainless steel tables, a handwashing sink, and purchase postharvest bins (\$7,000)
- **Squier Family Farm** to install roof and washable flooring, and acquire stock tanks, tables, a washing machine to convert to a cleanable greens spinner, and bins (\$7,000)
- **Sunrise Organic Farm LLC** to repair an agricultural well casing to prevent surface water from entering the well (\$7,000)
- **Wildstone Farm** to enclose and weatherize A wash/pack shed and to purchase A stainless steel 3 bay sink and tables (\$6,952)

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Resiliency and Adaptations: The Story of a Small Farm in Sutton

By Kerry O'Brien, Caledonia
County Conservation District

When the Vermont Clean Water Act was passed in 2015, small farms became subject to new regulations intended to better protect waters of the state from fields and farmstead runoff. Since then, small farms across the state have been working to adapt, find ways to balance productive farming with healthy waterways, and ensure nutrients are staying on the farm and not running off into nearby waterways.

Evelyn and Gordon Seymour starting farming in Sutton, Vermont in 1967 after leaving their small farm in Connecticut. They blended their first names and coined their farm "Evelon Farm". The farm has stayed in the family since. Their son James eventually became the farm manager and still works the farm today with his brother Alan and his nephew Kyle. Before starting work on the farm, Kyle attended Vermont Technical College and studied Dairy Farm Management. He studied innovations in the dairy industry, learned about federal and state farm assistance programs, and was introduced to new science and technologies behind the business. When he began working on the farm 6 years ago, he started thinking more about ways the farm could modernize, increase yields, and save money.



Kyle and his uncle James at their family farm in Sutton, Vermont.

In 2016, Kyle worked with the Caledonia County Conservation District and signed up for their Nutrient Management Planning Assistance program when Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs) became required for small farms. The Conservation District helped the farm collect soil samples on all their fields, compiled new maps, and collected field data needed to take a class to develop their plan.

After completing the field work, Kyle attended UVM Extension's "Digging In" class to write his NMP, which ran one day a week starting in January for six weeks. During the class, Kyle joined about 12 other farms and took a deep dive into his farm's assets - analyzing the soil quality of his fields and the type and quantity of nutrients they were applying to grow crops. He learned

some of their fields had a high nitrate leaching index, which meant nitrogen fertilizer applied to their fields might be leaching away and not be available as fertilizer for crops. He also learned the soil types and slopes on some of their fields had a high potential for soil loss. Not realizing they may have been losing precious soil and nutrient resources, he began working on how they could adapt and adjust the management of their fields.

Kyle talked with his uncle and they agreed to try no-till on their corn fields. After completing their second year of no-till they found their corn yields were comparable to before, and they were saving on time and fuel costs of tilling their fields. The other adjustment they made after developing their NMP was working to better target their nitrogen fertilizer.

After learning his fields were likely to leach nitrogen, he realized that applying urea at their usual amount per acre might not be the best approach. They now blend fertilizers and better target applications based on their soil sample results. After two years of this new approach they've noticed good returns on forage quality, their hay is showing a higher level of protein, and they've saved money on fertilizer.

Aside from their work on Nutrient Management, Kyle has also introduced other innovations on the farm. The farm recently installed rumination monitors on all their cows. At about \$90 per ear tag plus the expense of the system, they're now able to track each cow's health, monitor their activity and how much their eating, and determine when a cow is ready to breed. This has

helped improve their herd health, reduce medical costs, and reduce the cost of breeding. They've been able to get detection to nearly 100% without having to spend time monitoring the herd and checking every cow. Kyle believes this new system has already paid for itself with the savings its achieved.

Even with these new strategies, the farmers are keeping a close eye on things, particularly the weather. A soaking rain on a no-till field with unincorporated manure would be a problem. With weather becoming more unpredictable, sometimes the best laid plans don't always work out. Still, Kyle thinks they've adjusted fairly well so far and will continue to find ways to adapt.

For more information on developing or maintaining your Nutrient Management Plan, contact your local Conservation District or UVM Extension office.

Covid-19

continued from page 3

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

CLASSIFIEDS

For Sale:**BEES AND QUEENS****McFarline Apiaries***Untreated bee breeding*

VT 5 frame Nucs and deep singles

\$200-\$300, Available May-June

MCF Queens \$30: June to end of July

tmcfarline2@yahoo.com

www.mcfarlineapiaries.com**802-537-3294***Call or email now for details***Bees & Honey**

Queens and nucs: 'Ready to go' 5 frame nucs (you take nuc box) for \$170; and regular (bring your own box) 5 frame nucs for \$160! We are also selling 3# packages for \$140 each. A \$40 non-refundable deposit is required on all our nuc sales. Our Northern Survivor Queen prices have remained at \$32 unmarked; \$34 marked. See our website for discounts on orders of more than 11. These are our own hybrid queens from stock bred from various strains to breed the strongest and most favorable traits. See our site for more information. Please be advised: we do not ship priority mail outside of New England! All orders outside of New England must be express! Our web site is www.vtbees.com. 802-948-2057.

Cattle

4-year-old black angus proven bull for sale. Good bloodlines. Excellent temperament. 2500\$ delivered price. Call 802-558-8196 or 802-265-3078 for more info

12 - 2-month-old Holstein heifer calves. \$200 each or make an offer on all. We milk 200 cows and have too many. 802-375-5795

350+ cow and 200+ young stock barn/farm facility available for rent. Complete dairy farm with modern double 10 Boumatic parlor.

No livestock included. All buildings have slatted floor, no alley scraping needed. Headlocks in all livestock barns, mattresses, curtains, 2 bulk milk tanks. 700 acres of feed for purchase. Rent, buy or will consider raising young stock for other farmers. Let's discuss the possibilities. 802-533-2984

Purebred Polled Hereford yearling heifers. Lull Brook Farm call: Alden Dana 802-436-2068 or email adana77@comcast.net.

Equipment

Hay elevator - 15 ft, by Snowco, GE motor S-line; 11 (eleven) Utility Gates by Tractor Supply (50" high - 4 at 8 ft, 5 at 4 ft, 1 -6 ft, 1- 10 ft). One 16 gal heated tub, a 4.5 gal Fortex bucket, and various stock tanks. Call 802-694-1602 or email bonnehagenfarm@gmail.com.

2 Gehl forage boxes 970 and 980 on heavy running gear, 2 manure spreaders: NI 3932 and Kuhn tandem, Uebler 810 feed cart. I can be reached at 802-230-8525.

International 843 4-row narrow combine cornhead; 3250 Reel Auggie Mixer on gas 1995 Ford 450; used Agway water bowls. Call for prices 802-770-0959

Free old tires, good for farm use only. Call 603-256-8422.

3 pt hitch wood splitter, Farming wench, Empyre Pro

Outdoor Wood Furnace, two 550 gal fuel tanks and two 275 gal fuel tanks. 802-746-8979.

1949 Farmall H good paint & tires, runs well 802-592-3356.

Sled used for gathering sap. Made by Ben Thresher in Barnet. 802-592-3356

John Deere 4420 4wd combine, 2800 hours, two heads in good shape - \$15,000. Phone 802-442-5353.

New Holland 900 Forage Harvester. Excellent condition/field ready. Tandem axles. All tires new or like new. Has been very well maintained and always stored indoors. Metal Alert III, electrical control box. Price \$12,000. Westfield, VT, Orleans County. 802-355-3496. jcouture@maplesyrupvt.net.

1 new 12-4-28 tire. Also, Farmall H good condition - paint & tires. 802-592-3356

Reel Auggie 3250 mixer with scales on F-450 truck; IH 843 4 row narrow corn head; IH 7ft window head off 881 Harvester. Rutland, 802-770-0959

375 gal full tank \$100. CMT bale wrapper \$250. 2 bottom plow \$75. 802-426-3339

3000 gallon mueller bulk tank with 2-5 horsepower compressor. 802-487-4467

Mueller 500 gallon bulk tank with compressor in good condition \$800 OBO. Pequea model 250 3 pt hitch tractor saw with 30" blade - like new- \$1000 OBO. 3 pt hitch - 4 ft hydraulic log splitter \$1800 OBO 802-893-2262

1250 Girton bulk tank (sap only), 8ft back blade, 3 ton brock grain bin. 16 ft hay elevator, 20 ft hay elevator. 802-624-0143/802-895-4683

Red cedar posts. 7ft \$5.00. Sharp \$5.50. 8ft \$6.00. Haylage 35/ton. 802-265-4566

Hesston 8550 S 16 ft. Discbine with merger. Cummins motor like new always been in shed stored. 4280 engine

hours 3282 cutter hours \$41,000. IH 1486 tractor 160 hp. Deluxe cab AC low hours \$13,000. IH 1086 tractor 140 hp. New engine 54081000pto runs excellent \$6500. IH 2350 loader fits both tractors \$2500. Pair 20.8-38 dials for \$1000. 802-537-2435

2955 John Deere Tractor 4WD, platform with 740 loader, bucket, forks, bale grabber and rock bucket. 4450 John Deere Tractor 4WD, cab, 925 Mower conditioner with impellers. 802-236-4716

Used farm equipment, harrows, rakes, Tedder, all over 20 years old \$20 each. 1 Kaufman trailer 2001 \$150. Call 802-457-2613.

MicroDairy Design Pasteurizer for Sale 35 gallon max capacity and 5 gallon minimum, includes chart recorder, air space heater and thermometers. Can be used to make cheese, ice cream base, yogurt and kefir. Can also be used as a small bulk tank with additional equipment. Price \$8,500 Cobhillfrozenyogurt@gmail.com. Jeannine 802-436-2948.

John Deere 5510 tractor FWD, new tires. 3,453 hrs. Includes two extra rear tires with rim wheel weights \$19,000. Kuhn 8110 manure spreader. This twin auger side slinger is barely used and well maintained. \$11,500. Kubota 5400 DT-N Dual Traction narrow orchard tractor, AWD 1,800+ hours \$9,000 All equipment in great shape! 802-485-8428.

Loftness snow blower 7 foot. Double auger. Three point mounting. Hydraulic operated shoot. Great condition. Ready to use. Cat 2 or Cat 3 hitch. 100 hp or more to run. \$3,000. New these are \$8,500. Looking to move it. It's a terrific deal. Shaftsbury, VT. 781-307-6801.

2015 Houle manure spreader 5350 gallons. 2005 nh fp230 chopper. 4 steel wagons 20 feet. 2016 gehl skid steer 165 1 round baie wagon all steel 20 feet tandem krone rake

and tedder. Everthing is in excellent shape and re morin have sell cows for health reasons phone 802-895-2945/ 802-323-8110. Call after 7 pm.

Grain equipment for sale - 2 gravity box wagons in good condition, one with auger, \$1500 each, Beidler Family Farm, Randolph Center, 802-431-8530.

Reel Auggie Mixer on F-450 with scales; IH 843 Combine cornhead; IH 8817 Windrow head; Gehl 350 Spreader; Case 580 backhoe; 850 Dozer for parts. Call 802-770-0959

General

High Tunnel Greenhouse assembly and maintenance: LedgeWood, Harnois, Rimol and more. Complete assembly, end wall construction, poly installation, renovation, and repairs. Experienced and professional. Plan ahead! Get in touch now to get on the 2020 schedule. Contact Mike Feiner at feinervt@gmail.com, www.vineripe.net, (802) 498-8031.

Hay, Feed & Forage

Quality Canadian hay for sale, big/small squares wrapped, or unwrapped, round bales wrapped or unwrapped, 1st, 2nd, 3rd cuts available. Switch grass and straw available, call Richard at 802-323-3275

Square baled hay - top quality, vof certified organic, generous sized. 1st cut \$4.50/bale, 2nd cut \$5.50/bale at the barn in Barnet. 802-592-3088

2019 1st cut Timothy and clover hay \$ 5.00 a bale plus delivery fee. Call 603-256-8422.

1000 tons corn silage, processed in Colchester. 50 @ ton 802-272-3478 or 802-223-1370 or email sethgardner@hotmail.com

Excellent quality first cut wrapped round bales; baleage. Shelburne VT Call Andy 802-598-6060. Analysis available upon request.

CLASSIFIEDS

2019 1st Cut 4X4 Wrapped Round Bales for Sale \$40/ Bale, 2019 2nd Cut 4x4 Wrapped Round Bales for Sale \$45/Bale, South Pomfret, call Tom at 802-457-5834

2nd & 3rd cut haylage and corn silage for sale. Call Peter Gebbie 802-533-2984, leave a message.

ADDISON COUNTY

Large squares available in Addison, Vt. Hay is stored under cover. Looks like a long winter ahead of us. Call now and make sure you have enough. Contact S .L. Moore at 802-463-3875.

1st cut 4x5 round bales never wet. Good horse & cow hay. 802-948-2627 or 802-558-0166

Certified organic, small square bales always stacked and stored under cover, 35-40lbs/ bale. \$4/bale, discounts available for large quantities. Call 802-989-0781 for inquiries.

Hay for Sale in Addison, VT. Large square bales and small squares. \$50-60 for large, \$3.50-4.50 for small. Delivery available. Call Jack 802-989-8968

Hay for sale. \$3.25 bale. 802-377-5455

73 1st cut 5ft diameter round bales. \$30-\$35. Orwell 802-948-2211



Straw for sale - \$7/bale for 50 or more. \$8/bale for less than 50, \$6/bale for all in the barn, approx. 350. from our winter rye harvest in August. certified organic. Thornhill Farm, Greensboro Bend, 05842, todd@thornhillfarmvermont.com, 802.441.3176

BENNINGTON COUNTY

Corn Silage 1000 ton plus. Haylage 500 ton plus. Round bales 4x4. Square bales small. 802-394-2976

CALEDONIA COUNTY

Square baled hay- Top quality, VOF certified organic, generous sized. 1st cut \$4.50/bale, 2nd cut \$5.50/ bale at the barn in Barnet. 802-592-3088

CHITTENDEN COUNTY

Round bales for horses. Clean first cut timothy mixed grass, quality net wrapped 4' X 5' bales. Never wet. \$45. each. 802- 879-0391 Westford.

15 large 5x5 round bales mixed grass w/some timothy + clover 800+lbs \$50 ea. call 899-4126 or e-mail

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Good quality hay 1c & 2c from western US & Canada. Alfalfa orchard & orchard sweet grass 18 to 20% plus protein large bales & organic by trailer loads. Large or small square bales of straw whole or processed at farm we load on direct delivery by trailer load. Mountain View Dairy Farm 802-849-6266

LAMOILLE COUNTY

Organic baled straw. \$5.50/bale. Certified Organic. Valley Dream Farm, Cambridge, VT. 802-644-6598. email: valleydream@myfairpoint.net.

ORANGE COUNTY

2019 first cut square hay bales for sale. \$4.00 per bale. Delivery available. Bonnie Kennedy, Chelsea, VT. 802-685-2292.

Approximately 375 ton of high quality grass and clover first and second cut, cut extremely early in 2018. First finished May 22, second finished July 2nd. Tests high in energy and protein. 45% harvested "hay in a day". \$50 per ton. Chris 802-522-9485

ORLEANS COUNTY

Pure alfalfa for sale and also 1st, 2nd and 3rd cut big/ small squares, round bales, wrapped or unwrapped, straw and switch grass. Call Richard at 802-323-3275

Organic Certified Silage for Sale: We will deliver from our farm or you can come and pick up. Call for prices and delivery charge. 1-802-744-2444 or 802-274-4934 or 802-744-6553.

2nd & 3rd cut haylage and corn silage for sale. Call Peter Gebbie 802-533-2984, leave a message.

RUTLAND COUNTY

First cut 4x5 round bales. 802-265-4566.

Good quality 1st and 2nd round bales available, wrapped and dried please call 802-446-2435.

4 x 4 wrapped bales for sale. Please call either 802-247-6076 or 802-236-0144

WASHINGTON COUNTY

200 - 4x4 round wrapped bales 1st \$45. 802-229-9871

WINDHAM COUNTY

2017 4x4 wrapped baleage 1st & 2nd cutting certified organic good quality \$40 per bale 802-254-6982

Hay for sale 4x4 wrapped dairy quality@\$45 1st cut square bales never wet good horse hay @ \$5. 802-387-4412. Livewaterfarm@comcast.net

1st cut 4x5 round bales. Don Pettis, 802-265-4566

2018 4X4 wrapped baleage. June cut. Certified organic, never wet. \$40.00 per bale, quantity discount. 802-254-6982

1st cut hay. Good horse hay. \$4.50 bale 802-254-5069

WINDSOR COUNTY

Hay for sale-400 square bales, Reading, Windsor County VT. \$3.50 per bale at the barn. Call 802-484-7240

4x5 dry round bales \$45.00 delivery available. 802-457-1376

Rolling Meadows Farm: square bales in the field or barn \$4.00. Delivery can be arranged at \$5.50. Very nice hay from fertilized fields in the South Woodstock and Reading area. Call 802-484-5540 or goodfarmvt@gmail.com. Ask for David

1st. cut dry round bales for sale. Never been rained on, stored under cover. \$50. @ 1st. cut haylage bales for sale. \$ 45. @ rte. 5 Weathersfield Bow 802 -546-4340.

Dry Round Horse Hay, \$50/ Bale. 200 Bales left. Call 802-356-5030.

Wanted

Kuhn FC350GMower or will sell mine for parts 802-728-3760

Employment

Vegetable Farm, excellent soils, location & irrigation. Transition to new owner. Go to: www.LewisCreekFarm.com/ManagetoOwn.htm

Farm & Farmland

For Lease - 10 acres of organic meadow in Brandon, currently in alfalfa. Producing roughly 12-15 tons per year in dry hay. Three year lease available, price negotiable but approximately \$600/yr 802-247-8459

Horse Training Farm: 17 plus acres with X-C obstacles, galloping track, stadium jumps, full size ring, covered small arena, trails. 3 stall stable with paddocks, tack/ feed room, hay storage. 4 pastures have board fencing. Open concept cape farmhouse has 3 bedrooms, office, sun room, deck, fiber optic internet, solar, 2 car detached garage. Workshop, equipment storage, chicken house, gardens, orchard, stream, woods, views. Convenient to Dartmouth College and DH Medical Center. Comes "turn key, as is". \$675,000. 802-785-441

Opportunity for Barn Lease in Williston Summer 2020: Well maintained farm residence with equine barn, stalls, and pasture for up to 4 animals. Call Robin at 802-434-2788 for details.

Produce Safety Grants

continued from page 8

The Agency's Produce Program is committed to assisting produce growers with making produce safety improvements and upgrades to their farm operation focused on food safety and improving the sustainability of their businesses. For more details about the program visit agriculture.vermont.gov/produceprogram. For COVID-19 updates and resources for agriculture businesses, visit agriculture.vermont.gov/covid-19-information.



Introducing the Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Laboratory

By Rebecca Harvey, VT
Agency of Agriculture, Food &
Markets

Background and history of VAEL

In August 2011, Tropical Storm Irene destroyed the Waterbury State Complex, which housed laboratory facilities for the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Market's and Agency of Natural Resources (ANR). The labs and occupants were re-located to temporary facilities throughout the state while the planning and design for a new facility was underway. Despite the many hardships it caused, the flood provided an opportunity for the two agencies to strategize and discuss the merging of the The Agency of Agriculture and ANR La Rosa Environmental Labs into a single laboratory. In July 2015, the Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Laboratory



VAEL Chemist Steven Young collects surface water samples from Rood Pond analysis back at VAEL.

(VAEL) was formed.

Almost four years later, in early 2019, a brand-new, state of the art facility was opened in Randolph Center to house VAEL and other ANR and Agency laboratories. This new facility, also coined VAEL, is home to the VAEL chemical and biological testing lab, along

with the Agency's Weights and Measures, Plant Industry, and Animal Pathology Labs and the ANR Ambient Biomonitoring, Forest Health and Fish Health Labs. Over the next several months, we will be providing a spotlight on these labs and the services they provide to support Vermont's Agriculture and Environmental priorities.

Water Quality Testing

Each year, the VAEL Water Quality Labs process over 30,000 surface water samples collected by Agency water quality inspectors, partners at ANR and some volunteer groups across Vermont. Testing includes anything from E coli to alkalinity to heavy metals, but the most common request is for nutrient testing. In 2019, VAEL processed over 10,000 phosphorus samples and over 6,000 nitrogen samples. Roughly 85% of all water quality samples that the lab processes are submitted between May and September, which means summer is a busy time for all VAEL Staff. VAEL has five highly trained chemists that work in the water quality labs that perform these tests manually or with the use of automated instruments. But to help carry the load, two summer temps are hired each year.

The water quality lab is not, however an example of quantity over quality though, VAEL maintains accreditation for these analyses with the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP), which is no small feat. Our ability

to maintain this accreditation (especially during our big move to the new facility) demonstrates VAEL's dedication to producing high quality results in support of the Agency's and ANR's water quality initiatives. In addition to our analytical services, VAEL provides sampler

training events and provides research design guidance for our clients.

Many field efforts were delayed for the 2020 season, but VAEL is ready to start processing samples as soon as we receive them to help minimize data gaps in your work.



VAEL Chemist Dan McAvinney operating one of our two automated analyzers to process nutrient samples.



Working Lands Enterprise Board Announces FY20 Grantees

Over \$1.4 Million Invested in Vermont Ag and Forestry Businesses

By Lynn Ellen Schimoler,
Vt Agency of Agriculture,
Food & Markets

The Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI) and governing board (WLEB) were created by the legislature in 2012 to stimulate economic development in the agricultural and forestry sectors. WLEI is a collaborative effort between the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets, Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation, and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. WLEB, which finalizes all funding decisions, achieves this goal by making investments across businesses and service providers in critical leverage points which will have the highest return on investment. This initiative supports Vermont entrepreneurs by providing financial assistance to help innovate and grow their business while also creating jobs, building infrastructure, and promoting growth in economies and communities of Vermont's working landscape.

For 2020, the Working Lands Enterprise Board deployed over \$1.4 million in grants and contracts, to (36) Agriculture and Forestry businesses and service providers around the State. Part of the strategic plan for this year was the emphasis on large-scale market level and supply chain impacts in the dairy and forestry sectors, which

Dairy Visioning Event Rescheduled to September 2020

The Dairy Visioning and Planning event with Kitchen Table Consultants has been rescheduled to September 14-15, 2020. More information and the application will be forthcoming. Thank you for your understanding and interest in this event. For questions, please contact Laura Ginsburg: laura.ginsburg@vermont.gov or 802-522-2252

were eligible for grants up to \$150,000. Representing the forestry sector with projects to improve processing capabilities and healthy forest stewardship are Rick's Firewood and DCI Inc. who received funding that totals \$225,000. Kingdom Creamery, Wayward Goose, and Joneslan Farm are the larger dairy investments, totaling \$379,654, to complete projects in related to production and processing. Since its legislative inception in 2012, the Working Lands Enterprise Board has

invested over \$6 million dollars in 203 projects affecting every county of the state, leveraging over \$10 million in additional funds. For a complete list of contract and grant recipients, please visit the Working Lands website, <https://workinglands.vermont.gov/>

For further questions, please contact Lynn Ellen Schimoler, Senior Agricultural Business Development / Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets, 802-622-4477, or LynnEllen.Schimoler@vermont.gov.



FARMS FOR CITY KIDS®



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READING, VERMONT

Full time General Farm Worker: Field & forest work including sugar bush maintenance, brush hog & haying, and milking cows periodically. Salary based on experience. 40 + hours per week, which will include weekend rotational milking schedule, and allows for flexibility of hours during busy seasons (sugaring, haying, etc...). Ideal candidate will have the ability to operate tractors & various farm equipment, but we will train the right person. Health insurance is available.

**For further information about the farm,
visit farmsforcitykids.org.**
You may call Tatiana at 802-484-1236.
Please send resumé to Office@sbfvt.org

This Month's Recipe

Protein Packed Berry Smoothie

Recipe and image provided by the Milk Life campaign, representing the nation's milk companies.

Ingredients:

- 1 packet – plain instant oatmeal
- 1/2 cup – real milk
- 1/2 cup – strawberries, hulled, chopped
- 1 tbsp – honey or maple syrup
- 1/8 tsp – ground cinnamon
- 1 tbsp – walnuts, chopped (optional)

Instructions

1. Combine first five ingredients in the carafe of a blender.
2. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
3. In the morning, blend the mixture until smooth.
4. Top with chopped walnuts. Enjoy!



VERMONT FOOD SYSTEM PLAN ISSUE BRIEF

Issue: Food Access

Editor's note: This brief is part of the Vermont Agriculture & Food System Plan submitted to the legislature in January.

What's at Stake?

All Vermont residents should have access to nutritious local foods they can afford, and Vermont farms should all be profitable. However, many people in our state struggle with the rising cost of living, high housing and utility costs, transportation barriers, health issues, and underemployment, all of which can make it challenging to afford food. Today, 74,520 Vermonters are food insecure, including 18,760

children. To build a robust and equitable food system, we must address both food access and farm viability simultaneously. For the health and wellbeing of all eaters, food access cannot be addressed by the charitable food system alone but rather must be considered in relation to all the major market channels: retail, direct markets, and institutions. By increasing the ability of all eaters to access and use local food, we also benefit our farm businesses and the entire Vermont economy.

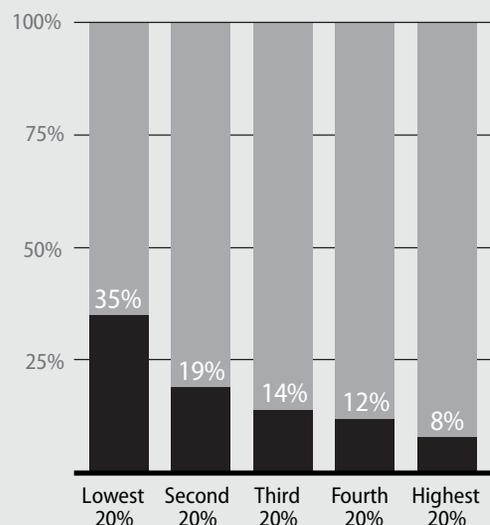
Current Conditions

Although Vermont's local food economy grew from \$7.5 billion in 2007 to \$11.3 billion in 2017, access to Vermont-grown foods by all residents continues to remain inequitable. Programs which increase accessibility to locally produced foods for low-income and at-risk populations

have grown and diversified in an attempt to address this inequity. At the same time, efforts to improve Vermont farm viability through expanding markets for locally produced foods have often focused on value-added, specialty, and export markets which do not inherently increase access within local communities where Vermont residents shop.

Vermont residents shop for and obtain food through a wide variety of outlets, or "market channels," with the majority of food purchased at supermarkets. Some Vermont communities may have multiple food outlets,

Percent of Income After Taxes Spent on Food, by Income Quintile (National, 2018)
Americans' food expenditures as percent of income varies significantly, with the lowest income quintiles spending a significant portion on food.



others are "food deserts" without sufficient access to fresh, nutritious, foods within a reasonable distance. Some Vermonters rely on meals provided by state, municipal, or non-profit institutions like schools, prisons, and hospitals. Food from any outlet may be supplemented by additional food received from charitable programs, including food shelves and free meal sites. Most market channels are limited in their ability to secure locally produced foods due to a variety of reasons, the most predominant including price points, ease of ordering, availability, and

transportation logistics. Additional barriers exist within the operational mindset of some of these outlets, including a reluctance to adapt to different size packaging, varying appearance, consistency, and flavor, and/or a set of priorities that don't include sourcing locally grown and produced food to support the local economy.

Many of Vermont's residents cannot afford to increase their spending on food. Food expenditures are often the most flexible of the basic needs, that is, in the short term, it is easier to purchase less or cheaper food than to lower housing or transportation costs. Local food is often more expensive than that produced out-of-state at the industrial scale. However, Vermont farmers are unable to reduce the cost of the foods they produce and net farm incomes are often below the livable wage themselves. Vermont's effort to increase access to local food by all its residents must

do so with an understanding of production costs and attention to providing a livable net income for farmers.

Closing the Economic Gap Current Conditions

Barriers to increasing access to local foods are reinforced by the cheap cost of industrial, nationally, and internationally sourced foods with which Vermont farms must compete. Even when retail and wholesale buyers and consumers understand and support the social and environmental benefits of local agriculture, price is often the bottom line.

Bottlenecks and Gaps

- Fixed costs of production limit farmers' ability to reduce prices while maintaining economically viable businesses.
- Barriers in the supply chain affect the availability and affordability of local foods and reduce the income farmers receive. More aggregators, processors, and distributors are needed to help bring local food to markets but this also requires increased product volume.
- Many Vermont residents have limited resources, not only in money

and transportation but also in time for food preparation and familiarity with utilizing different ingredients.

Opportunities

- Efforts to keep farmland in production and to increase the viability of farms can have a positive effect on local food access.
- New models and growing support for socially responsible businesses can help farms meet the social need of food access without sacrificing business viability.
- Efforts to increase consumer purchasing power are key to growing the number of Vermont residents who can afford local food. This includes expanding programs such as 3SquaresVT, and encouraging policies that help people meet basic needs like health care and housing.

Programs

Current Conditions

A number of Vermont programs across market channels increase the purchasing power of people and food outlets and enable them to purchase locally produced food. For example, many Vermont food co-ops

offer members who qualify for food assistance additional discounts on purchases. Several local food incentive programs are underwritten by federal and philanthropic grant funding. Examples include vouchers for fresh local food; “Crop Cash” through which 3SquaresVT users can double their dollars at most Vermont farmers markets and some farmstands; and reduced price or free Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm shares available to low-income individuals and families. In addition, both charitable programs and institutional meal programs purchase some of the food they distribute from local farms.

Bottlenecks and Gaps

- Many of these programs have limited budgets reliant on philanthropic and governmental funding, which can lead to caps on the services or number of recipients. Availability of funding may also change and it is often difficult to fund a program long-term through these sources.
- Participation can be hampered by a lack of consumer understanding about how the programs operate, the burden participants face in learning about and applying for multiple programs, the stigmatization of receiving charity, and a perception that local food is exclusive and elitist.
- Participation in these programs can be burdensome to the farmers, who need to understand different programs available to them and acquire and manage infrastructure such as EBT machines.

Opportunities

- For some farms, participation in these programs supports their existing business plan.
- Many market outlets and social service providers, including healthcare entities, are interested in supporting these programs.
- 3SquaresVT benefits can be applied to food-producing items (trees, seeds, etc.) as well as food itself, providing a way for recipients to produce their own food over a span of time and potentially freeing up additional budget for purchases from local farms.
- Program providers do coordinate to a certain extent and are interested in increasing alignment of outreach and evaluation to more effectively and efficiently serve participants.

Gleaning

Current Conditions

“Gleaning” means gathering food left behind after harvest, an activity historically performed by food insecure people themselves. Modern gleaning is a service provided to farms by coordinating agencies that engage volunteers to harvest edible crops or collect already-harvested crops and facilitate distribution to charitable food outlets. These gleanings are donated by the farm. Federal charitable tax deductions are sometimes available but are often not utilized by the farm.

Bottlenecks and Gaps

- Not all areas of Vermont are served by gleaning programs with adequate staff and infrastructure.
- The charitable food system experiences market

saturation during peak harvest times and cannot fully utilize all the surplus food that is available.

- The availability of gleaning (and potential tax deductions) as an option to manage surplus food can disincentivize the development of other markets for this surplus.

Opportunities

- Data, information, and trends observed in gleaning programs can inform other food system development opportunities.
- On-farm surplus presents an opportunity to increase in-state paying markets for surplus or seconds in addition to serving the charitable food system.
- Gleaning is a community-building, educational activity that furthers community members’ connections with their local farms and increases opportunities for people to try local foods, leading to increased consumer comfort and purchasing by individuals and meal programs.

Summary

Though Vermont has a strong reputation for its local food system, many Vermonters struggle to put food on the table and aren’t able to fully participate in that local food system. It is critical for the legislature to support programs that help lift people out of poverty and provide access to local food for all Vermonters. Strengthening the programs that work at the intersection of food access and farm viability will feed people today while supporting our local agricultural economy. These programs have a lasting impact on the individuals and communities

Recommendations

- Fund a pilot aggregation and sales system that effectively serves both the charitable food system and institutional and other market channels, through a structured partnership among established processors, aggregators, and gleaners. The pilot would include data collection on specific marketable surplus food products. Potential partners include Center for an Agricultural Economy, Deep Root Organic Cooperative, Salvation Farms, and the Vermont Department of Corrections. Estimated cost: \$100,000 per year for four years.
- The Vermont Legislature should create a Local Food Access Funding Program, with an appropriation of at least \$250,000 a year, available to multiple organizations to support program needs including:
 - maintaining or increasing benefits that increase consumer purchasing power for local food at farmers markets or other retail outlets, and outreach around these services.
 - making wireless EBT machines available at no cost to producers and farmers markets. Estimated cost: \$43,000 annually to support equipment and fees for 45 farmers markets and 20 farms.
 - purchasing food directly from Vermont farmers by organizations in the charitable food system.
- The Vermont Legislature should fund an appropriation of at least \$100,000 a year to enable the hiring of a shared full-time staff person to support coordination across gleaning programs in the state.
- Social service providers and those who are delivering food access programs should each understand the many different program options available and work cooperatively to market them to reach full utilization with less administrative burden on participants. State agencies should explore ways to coordinate or otherwise support this effort in partnership with key nonprofit partners.

who are given opportunities to engage directly with Vermont farms and the food they raise, building familiarity and comfort with using local foods and instilling a sense that local food is for everyone. Beyond these programs, however, long-term farm viability and food access require efforts to strengthen the economic stability of both farmers and consumers.

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